

Lord Acton's Theory of Nationality

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"The coexistence of several nations under the same state is a test as well as the best security of its freedom."

— LORD ACTON

THE philosophical framework for Lord Acton's theory of nationality, or to be more accurate his theory of multinationality, derives both from Aristotle and from Christian thinkers of the Middle Ages and the early modern period. In Aristotle he found the view that the nature of the state is to be a plurality. Aquinas gave him "a very large element of political liberalism,"¹ while Leibnitz contributed the idea of development, particularly the notion that development involves continuity and progress. Combining these points of view, Acton embraced a patently individualistic position, believing firmly that only the individual man possesses moral and political rights. Classes, races and states are at best chance groupings, at worst tortuous human inventions, and consequently have no inherent rights. It is "easier to find people fit to govern themselves," according to Acton, "than people fit to govern others."²

His theory of multinationality emerges from his view of society. Despite his emphasis on individual autonomy, Acton differed markedly from the Utilitarians: he envisaged society not as an aggregate of individuals each pursuing his own happiness, but as an organism in which there is growth as well as diversity. The atomistic view of society is based on the fallacy that, initially, society was a collection of individuals rather than a conglomeration of families. This fallacy ignores the fact that man is as much a social animal as he is a political animal desiring individual liberty. Consequently, the best type of society is that which reduces "all political authority within defined limits,"³ brings "the civil power under the protection of conscience,"⁴ and unmistakably promotes social justice. Such a society by its very "nature" will be not only "some-

¹ Quoted in Sir Ernest Barker (ed.), "Introduction," *The Social Contract* (London, 1960), p. viii.

² Additional mss. 4941, quoted in Gertrude Himmelfarb, *Lord Acton* (Chicago, 1962), p. 173.

³ Lord Acton, "Inaugural Lecture," *Essays on Freedom and Power* (New York, 1955), p. 81.

⁴ *Ibid.*

thing organic" but also pluralist. If power is distributed throughout the state, absolutism will be neutralized; a multiplicity of governmental centers will promote the diffusion of political knowledge, and the organization of society into classes and corporations will guarantee decentralization and independent opinion.⁵

The state could never grow out of society as its expression and fruit, unless society were organized and distributed into distinct classes and corporations, each enjoying special power in its own sphere; where this distribution is wanting, and the social mass comprehends no moral persons but only physical units, society is atomic; and the state cannot be an organism, an expression or organ of society but is supreme and absolute, whatever its form and constitutional pretences may be.⁶

It is regrettable that having concerned himself with a pluralist view of society, Acton devoted a disproportionate amount of his attention to an organic theory of the state. He seems to have accepted the functional organism of John of Salisbury, and even that thinker's predilection for monarchy:

The organization of a constitutional monarchy is the work of opposing powers, interests, and opinions by which the monarch is deprived of his exclusive authority, and the throne is surrounded with and guarded by political institutions ⁷

Thus, for Acton society is a person, frail but capable of infinite goodness; not a mechanical device but a living organism subject to growth and decay, and dependent on the delicate adjustments of its parts in a pluralist whole.

Acton's pluralism is even more intelligible in the context of power. As the avowed enemy of absolutism he believed that naked power of arbitrary rule is reprehensible. One of the tragic laws of the modern world, he declared, is "that power tends to expand indefinitely, and will transcend all barriers, abroad and at home, until met by superior forces."⁸ Consequently, power is a dangerous entity, whose relentless expansion can only be curbed when men

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

⁶ Lord Acton, *Rambler*, January, 1861, p. 199.

⁷ Lord Acton, "The History of Freedom in Antiquity," *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 72.

⁸ Lord Acton, *Renaissance to Revolution, Lectures on Modern History* (New York, 1961), p. 51.

learn to "suspect power more than vice."⁹ And it is essential for us to remember that the "true theory of freedom excludes all absolute power."¹⁰ Acton is really opposed to absolute power and the misuse of power, but his indiscriminate condemnation of power *per se* has left him open to serious criticism. A more salient view is his observation that politics in the last few hundred years has followed the Machiavellian pattern. Thus, Machiavelli "is not a vanishing type, but a constant and contemporary influence."¹¹ But politics, Acton warned, must not be made an affair of might or a mere struggle for power. It must be based on firm moral principles and on eternal ideals: "Where there is no vision the people perish." In an oft-quoted passage he warns: "Great men are almost always bad men. . . . Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."¹²

As with his other theories and viewpoints, Acton's discussion of nationality is individualistic, ignoring definitions and current debates. He was, for example, familiar with Mill's approach, but instead of presenting us with a critique of Mill's work, he confronts us with a historical and philosophical point of view. Acton argued for multi-nationality, the coexistence of several nations under the same state, as the logical outcome of pluralism. The "same state," in Acton's vocabulary, referred not to the nation-state, but to either a territorial state, a federal structure, or an empire. His opposition to the nation-state was based on the premise that too strong an emphasis on national units will lead to totalitarianism and anarchy. Diversity, on the other hand, demands a constitutional as well as organizational structure which promotes and preserves liberty. Under these conditions intolerance is sure to find a corrective and absolutism a check.

Acton in discussing nationality, which he, undoubtedly aware of its elusiveness and varying ingredients, failed to define, began by examining the old European state system, in which the rights of nationalities went unrecognized by governments. "The interest of the reigning families, not those of the nations, regulated the frontiers; and administration was conducted generally without any

⁹ Quoted in Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, (London, 1963), p. 129.

¹⁰ Quoted in G. E. Fasnacht, *Acton's Political Philosophy* (London, 1952), p. 139.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

¹² "Acton-Creighton Correspondence," *Essays on Freedom and Power*, pp. 335-336.

reference to popular desires.”¹³ In times of peace the aristocracy retained its privileges, the church her prosperity, and the monarchy its hereditary crown. Even in times of war, there was no national cause at stake, and no attempt to arouse national feeling. Rulers exhibited great courtesy to one another and battles were fought in the spirit of chivalry. “The art of war became a slow and learned game.”¹⁴ Additionally, monarchies were united both by a community of interests and by family alliances. A marriage contract was often the signal for a protracted conflict or a check on someone’s ambitions. After the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) the only wars waged were those involving inheritance or those against “not only unprotected but obnoxious”¹⁵ states.

Acton contended that the notion of “nationality” arose only in the eighteenth century. At first an “abstract” concept, it became a revolutionary doctrine when linked with the theory of popular sovereignty. This is nowhere more tragically demonstrated than in the partition of Poland, which brought the whole question of nationality to the fore. For the Polish monarchy was unique in the sense that it was elective. The crown was bestowed by the nation, and “none could hope to redeem their losses or increase their power in a country to which marriage and descent gave no claim.”¹⁶ The dethronement of the king and the subsequent division of his kingdom were carried out in defiance not only of popular feelings, but of public law. It was an act of “wanton violence,”¹⁷ which awakened the theory of “nationality” in Europe. For the first time a cry was heard criticizing this destruction and defending the right of the Polish people to an “independent community.”¹⁸ Even Edmund Burke, no defender of narrow nationalism, wrote that no wise or honest man could approve of the partition. “Thenceforward,” declared Acton, “there was a nation demanding to be united in a state — a soul, as it were wandering in search of a body.”¹⁹

The modern theory of nationality, Acton continued, owes much to conditions in France and the French Revolution. When the France of history and the French state fell, a new principle of

¹³ Lord Acton, “Nationality,” *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 144.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 146.

unity was needed to supplant the old. The philosophic notion of a state of nature was therefore quickly seized upon and transformed into the basis of the nation. The French people were regarded as an ethnological rather than historic product, the underlying assumption being "that a unity existed separate from the representation and the government wholly independent of the past, and capable at any moment of expressing or of changing its mind."²⁰ The new French Republic expressed for the first time in history the notion of an "abstract nationality,"²¹ and this in turn when reinforced by popular sovereignty gave rise "to the idea of nationality independent of the political influence."²²

French nationalism, Acton stated, tended to be even more oppressive than absolute monarchy. Posing at first as a champion of the rights of all men, it soon degenerated into a crude type of imperialism. Later, at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the new aspirations for national and popular rights were crushed. Nationality, which the old regime had ignored, and which had been exploited by the Revolution and Empire, was repressed by the restoration. But after 1815 nationalism, which had begun as a protest, "grew into a condemnation of every state that included different races, and finally became the complete and consistent theory, that the state and the nation must be coextensive."²³

Acton was not alone in scholarly grappling with the question of nationality. John Stuart Mill made it an integral part of his case for representative government, and some consideration of his theory is necessary to clarify Acton's ensuing discussion. Mill took a utilitarian approach that presented the usefulness of nationality in creating a common public opinion conducive to self-government.

A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality if they are united among themselves by common sympathies which do not exist between them and others, which make them cooperate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves exclusively.²⁴

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 148.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 148.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 156.

²⁴ J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, Liberty and Representative Government* (London, 1962), pp. 359-360.

It is evident that for Mill "common sympathies" and some form of self-determination constituted the basis of nationality. Likewise "common sympathies" are the marks that separate one people from another and give the separated group its sense of identity. Mill tended to the view that just as no two persons are exactly alike, no two nationalities are the same. A nationality is a distinct cultural entity.

So far Mill's definition seems reasonable, but what is debatable is his explanation of the causal factors in nationality. Mill contended that the feeling of nationality may have been generated by "various causes":

Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past.²⁵

Mill's list of contributory factors is broad, ranging from race, language, and religion to geography, but it is not broad enough. Some, but certainly not all, nations have evolved from such causes. They are, in fact, relevant only to the European nations that grew in part out of the Treaty of Westphalia. Moreover, such vague generalities as "identity of political antecedents" and "community of recollections" do not adequately express the subtle factors which created this sense of togetherness. Mill admitted that forces potent in one case may be absent in another and that the terrorists of one age could become the patriots of another. But Mill did not envisage the great multinational states of the present era.

Acton categorically stated that Mill failed to understand the development of nationalism. Mill had sanctioned the nation-state — a retrogressive step in Acton's opinion. To Mill's contention that "it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities,"²⁶ Acton responded that where "political and national boundaries coincide, society ceases to advance, and nations relapse into a condition corresponding to that of men who renounce intercourse with their fellow men."²⁷ Acton reserved for

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

²⁶ Quoted in Lord Acton, "Nationality," *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 156.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

Mazzini his most cutting criticisms. It was only with the massive influence of this Italian leader that nationality lost its connection with liberty. More concerned with unity and nationality than with "forms of government,"²⁸ Mazzini divorced ends from means.

Acton's criticism of Mill and Mazzini is not altogether valid. Lecturing in 1868 on *The Rise and Fall of the Mexican Empire*, he displayed no less vagueness than Mill in his own terminology. Considering Louis Napoleon's Mexican expedition, he described Mexican society with these words: "A society so constituted could not make a nation. There was no middle class, no impulse to industry, no common civilization, no public spirit, no sense of patriotism."²⁹ The phrases, "no common civilization," "no public spirit," and "no sense of patriotism" have a Mill-like ring. Furthermore, with regard to preunified Italy, Mill and Mazzini realized that there was a clear-cut case for foreign withdrawal. They recognized that Italy already possessed the seeds of unity. Mazzini, as a humanitarian nationalist, was not opposed to liberty or for that matter to equality. Nor was he a narrow chauvinist only concerned with Italian affairs. He saw Italy as part of Europe, and Europe as part of a wider world. True enough, Mazzini was foremost in advocating Italian unity, but this was a question of priority. Italian national unity was essential if there was going to be an Italian presence in Europe. In a passage very reminiscent of Mill, Mazzini concluded:

Italy therefore will be one. Her geographical condition, language, and literature; the necessities of defense, and of political power; the desire of the populations, the democratic instinct innate in our people, the presentiment of a progress in which all the forces and faculties of the country must concur, the consciousness of an initiative in Europe, and of great things yet to be achieved by Italy for the world, all point to this aim. There is no obstacle in the way that may not be easily overcome, no objection that may not be historically and philosophically met and confuted.³⁰

The case for Italian autonomy was as strong as the case for Polish autonomy!

Acton condemned what he called nationality "founded on the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

²⁹ Quoted in Fasnacht, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

³⁰ Quoted in Hans Kohn, *Nationalism, Its Meaning and History*, (Princeton, 1965) pp. 120-121.

perpetual supremacy of the collective will.”³¹ This emphasis makes the “unity of the nation” paramount, and all other factors secondary. But a state based on nationality is nothing more than a “fictitious unity,” and as such is a threat to a pluralist society and an enemy of natural rights. “Whenever,” Acton continued his argument, “a single definite object is made the supreme end of the state, be it the advantage of a class, the safety or the power of the country, the greatest happiness of the greatest number, or the support of any speculative idea, the state becomes for the time inevitably absolute.”³² To counteract absolutist tendencies Acton imposed a theory of liberty. Actualization of liberty, he argued, demands the limitation of public authority. And this cannot be accomplished where national unity becomes the prerequisite of statehood. Nationality is an essential but not a supreme element in determining the forms of the state. Liberty is the only object which benefits all alike and provokes no sincere opposition. It seeks not arbitrary change, but a careful respect for political and social life. In short, its end is diversity and not uniformity.

The strength of Acton’s case for the multinational state rests on a threefold argument: multinationality upholds liberalism, provides the opportunity for the advancement of backward groups, and makes possible a certain amount of miscegenation which may rejuvenate a race.

Believing that liberty “provokes diversity, and diversity preserves liberty,”³³ Acton maintained that diversity in a state is “a firm barrier against the intrusion of government beyond the political sphere.”³⁴ The presence of different nations in a given state is analogous to the independence of the Church in the state. “It provides against the servility which flourishes under the shadow of a single authority, by balancing interests, multiplying associations, and giving to the subject the restraint and support of a combined opinion.”³⁵ In the same way it promotes independence, tolerance, a greater source of public opinion, and decentralized political authority. In a famous passage Acton contended: “The coexistence of several nations under the same state is a test, as well as the best

³¹ Lord Acton, “Nationality,” *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 158.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 159.

³³ Lord Acton, “Nationality,” *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 160.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

security of its freedom."³⁶ In effect, multinationality is not only one of the chief instruments of civilization, but indicates "a state of greater advancement than the national unity which is the ideal of modern liberalism."³⁷ Acton, therefore, concluded that the degree of a country's liberalism may be measured by the extent to which it accepts and integrates its various national groups. Extreme ethnocentricity is an indication of lack of security and the inability to relate to a wider social circle.

The presence of several nationalities in one state is a "necessary condition of civilized life."³⁸ If people cannot live together, they are not truly civilized, and the liberal person is an eminently civilized being. But there are other benefits besides the personal. "Inferior races are raised by living in political union with races intellectually superior."³⁹ Acton's emphasis, here, is on cultural rather than physical characteristics. Both Mill and Acton spoke of "inferior" and "superior" races as well as "civilization," and their positions are in this respect curiously similar. They were not, of course, presenting a Social Darwinist theory of race; they simply shared the belief that other societies were to be measured by the cultural values cherished by Victorian society.

Another benefit of multinationality is that exhausted and "decaying nations are revived by the contact of a younger vitality."⁴⁰ This implies that some ethnic groups may become hidebound and stagnant and that intermingling at all levels with another group may serve as a stimulus and challenge. Acton was insistent that multinationality has a positive effect even on government. Nations that have lost their capacity for government or their ability to marshal their resources are restored and educated anew under the discipline of a stronger and less corrupt race. It is a process somewhat akin to regeneration. Acton's own words are worth reproducing:

This fertilizing and regenerating process can only be obtained by living under one government. It is in the cauldron of the state that the fusion takes place by which the vigour, the knowledge and the capacity of one portion of mankind may be communicated to another.⁴¹

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

On cultural and political grounds, multinationality offers far more to both society and the individual than does the nation-state.

Like John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton praised the benefits of miscegenation. Mill had argued that whatever tends "to the admixture of nationalities" is a benefit to the human race. He also contended that the resulting amalgam, like a crossed breed of animals, inherits "the special aptitudes and excellencies of all its progenitors."⁴² Acton went a little further than Mill and defended miscegenation on moral as well as biological grounds. According to him, the "mixture of races" is at the heart of Christianity. It is the mission of the Church to overcome national differences, so that there will be neither "Jew nor Gentile," but a oneness in Christ. Even so, the Christian idea of freedom makes room for different races in one state. And the state which is reluctant to tolerate differences "and to do justice to the peculiar character of various races must from the same cause interfere in the internal government of religion."⁴³ The failure to accept racial diversity, observed Acton, is a step in the direction of totalitarianism:

If we take the establishment of liberty for the realization of moral duties to be the end of civil society, we must conclude that those states are substantially the most perfect which, like the British and Austrian Empires, include various nationalities without oppressing them. Those in which no mixture of races has occurred are imperfect; and those in which its effects have disappeared are decrepit. A state which is incompetent to satisfy different races condemns itself; a state which labours to neutralize, to absorb, or to expel them, destroys its own vitality; a state which does not include them is destitute of the chief basis of self-government.⁴⁴

Strong words indeed coming from a man who had not lived through the two great world wars of the twentieth century! Acton's observations are both highly prophetic as they condemn many liberal democratic states of today for being neither liberal nor democratic, and very farsighted as they warn against the Balkanization of the world and the proliferation of small states.

A notion inextricably linked to the foregoing is Acton's view that the theory of nationality is a retrograde step in history.⁴⁵ Acton

⁴² J. S. Mill, *op. cit.*, p. 364.

⁴³ Lord Acton, "Nationality," *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 163.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.

contended that, if the nation-state concept is overemphasized, then the existence of minorities is seriously threatened. Where minority rights are jeopardized, majority rule is absolutist. Insistence on the domination of one group may lead to "inferior races" being placed in a condition of dependence, reduced to servitude, or outlawed, if not in the extreme instance exterminated. A claim founded solely on the basis of race is a denial of human worth, and runs the risk of political and moral ruin. People will have power not because they are qualified, but because they belong to a privileged group. "From this difficulty of races with political pretensions, but without political position the Eastern world escaped by the institution of castes."⁴⁶ And in a state where there are only two races there is often recourse to rivalry and slavery. Acton's position is that when different races inhabit different territories of one empire, the conditions are most favorable for the establishment of a highly developed system of freedom.

The great importance of nationality, Acton concluded, is that it constitutes the basis of political capacity. "The character of a nation determines in great measure the form and vitality of the state. Certain political habits and ideas belong to particular nations and they vary with the course of the national history."⁴⁷ The overwhelming weaknesses of nationality are two: first, the settlement at which it aims is impossible, for groups are capable of infinite classifications and divisions; and second, it marks the end of revolutionary ideas. It prevents not only the natural development but the extension of the state and makes the collective will subject to fictitious factors.

Acton's plea for a multinational state is based on a recognition of the value of federalism, which he saw as the logical extension of the multinational state. Vague as to what he meant by the term, federalism, Acton gave the impression that it is the federal spirit which is important rather than the actual arrangement. Federalism is a means to an end — the dispersion of authority. Otherwise democracy could become afflicted by its absolute power. The division of power which is at the heart of federalism not only provides for more humane government, but allows "different nationalities, religions and epochs of civilization to exist in harmony side by side."⁴⁸

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 167.

⁴⁸ Additional mss. 4895, Cambridge University Library.

Furthermore, power in a federation is consensual rather than coercive. It demands, if it is to work, cooperation, restraint, and understanding. Acton regarded federalism as incompatible with the concept of the nation-state. Apart from imperialism, only federalism offers a prospect for large-scale organization of the world. It contributes to peace, prosperity, and understanding.

The institutionalization of a federal system, Acton noted, first came into being in Switzerland and the Netherlands. As a result the theorists came from this area. But federalist ideas appear in many other thinkers, particularly in Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Kant. In the United States, federalist ideas appeared at the Constitutional Convention, in *The Federalist Papers*, and in the constitutional debates prior to the civil war. *The Federalist Papers* pointed to the fact that federalism is a process — a very worthwhile point of view — while Calhoun later spoke of “concurrent majorities” as a good basis for society. While showing a marked preference for monarchies rather than republics, Acton was generous in his praise of the United States’ federal experiment. In his last lecture, discussing the American Constitution, he concluded on a federalist note:

That principle of division was the most efficacious restraint on democracy that has been devised; for the temper of the Constitutional Convention was as Conservative as the Declaration of Independence was revolutionary. The Federal Constitution did not deal with the question of religious liberty. . . . Slavery was deplored, was denounced, and was retained. . . . Weighed in the scales of liberalism the instrument, as it stood, was a monstrous fraud. And yet, by the development of the principle of Federalism, it has produced a community more powerful, more prosperous, more intelligent, and more free than any other which the world has seen.⁴⁹

Throughout his discussion Acton failed to present a clear and acceptable definition of nationality. The apparent equation of nationality with nationalism and his wholesale condemnation of the latter as realized in the nation-state put Acton in a paradoxical position similar to his position *vis-à-vis* power. In this regard his argument for multinationality is weakened, since the multinational state presupposes discrete national units, and consequently a certain amount of nationality. It might be argued in defense of Acton

⁴⁹ Lord Acton, *Lectures on Modern History*, p. 314.

that the multinational whole is not strictly the sum of its parts; and that the necessary evil of a part does not thereby reflect upon the whole, or to paraphrase Pope, all partial evil is universal good. The paradox is nonetheless disturbing.

A further disturbing aspect of Acton's account was his strange neglect of the most important ingredient of either nationality or multinationality, namely patriotism. If patriotism is to the political life what faith is to religion — and the analogy has many convincing points of correspondence — then patriotism may be a force for good, and not just for evil. Acton was apparently of such a mind when he referred to "true patriotism" and its ability to transform "selfishness into sacrifice."⁵⁰ But he failed to distinguish clearly between "true" patriotism and nationalism, and consequently his arguments for multinationality and against nationality were one-sided.

Although somewhat paradoxical and one-sided, Acton's theory of multinationality is nonetheless of striking validity. It provides not only for a more equitable internal arrangement of the state, but also for a more viable external relationship. Pluralist societies are better disposed to the creation of internal organizations and communities, which could transcend narrow nationalism and the unsavory aspects of state sovereignty. Acton's distrust of the nation-state has been more than justified by the violence and virtual anarchy of international relations in the past century.

Finally, where a state is already federal in character and non-contiguous or multiethnic in composition, Acton's theory is especially applicable. Such characteristics could be manipulated into a powerful foundation rather than, as is often the case, suppressed into a shaky substructure. In federal structures, such as Canada, trapped between centralist and decentralist forces, the theory would enhance national unity, yet allow the state sufficient flexibility to meet the pressures of modern society. In such underdeveloped countries as Nigeria, Malaysia, and even Pakistan, which have a history of tribal or regional conflict, and where the federal tradition is still being tested, a more emphatic multinationality could enhance the equilibrium between centripetal and centrifugal forces. Unity without diversity is obviously impossible in these states. Fragmentation, on the other hand, would exacerbate rather than solve the problems of nationality, especially where boundaries are ill-defined and economic viability is uncertain. In territories like

⁵⁰ Lord Acton, "Nationality," *Essays on Freedom and Power*, p. 163-4.

the former West Indian Federation, which now consists of several sovereign states and a number of semiautonomous communities, Acton's theory could lay the groundwork for greater regional co-operation. Indeed, the establishment in recent years of regional common markets and cultural associations is a significant step towards the implementation of the Actonian vision.